United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General, in Geneva for meeting of Administrative Committee on Coordination, is "relieved" to learn that Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yassir Arafat is "safe and sound" following his plane crash yesterday.

+ Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Vladimir Petrovsky to report to Secretary-General on recent meeting with Libyan Leader in Tripoli.

+ Drug situation termed "extremely serious" by Executive Director of United Nations Drug Control Programme, as Commission on Narcotic Drugs opens thirty-fifth session in Vienna.

+ Information Committee stresses need to address technological imbalances between poor and industrial countries in information field.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who has been kept informed about the search for the airplane of Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Chairman Yassir Arafat, said today he was relieved to learn that Mr. Arafat had been found "safe and sound". Mr. Arafat's plane crashed yesterday in the Libyan desert.

According to a statement issued today in Geneva, the Secretary-General was spending part of the day at the World Health Organization's offices to preside over the work of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC). Today's meeting dealt with role of the United Nations during the next decade and on contributions to be made by specialized agencies, individually and collectively.

Last night, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Coordinator for Emergency Assistance Jan Eliasson reported to the

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Secretary-General on his latest mission to Bangladesh and Myanmar. Mr. Eliasson was sent to the two countries on 30 March to examine humanitarian matters relating to refugees fleeing into Bangladesh from Myanmar.

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The Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Vladimir Petrovsky, met yesterday in Tripoli with Libyan head of state Colonel Muammar El-Qaddafi.

Mr. Petrovsky was sent to Tripoli last week by the Secretary-General to seek the cooperation of Libya in complying with Security Council resolution 731 (1992), which asked Libya to cooperate in establishing responsibility for the downing of Pan Am flight 103 and UTA flight 772.

In a press communiqué issued yesterday, Under-Secretary-General Petrovsky said he and his delegation had had a two-hour "serious and frank" meeting with the Libyan leader, and that he would report the results to the Secretary-General in Geneva today.

He said the United Nations had been assured by the Libyan authorities that the question of the attack on foreign embassies was considered closed and no repetition of such incidents would take place. Regarding exit visas for foreign nationals working in Libya, the United Nations had had also been assured that this question was solved and the Libyan authorities would not prevent any foreigners from leaving the country.

On 31 March, the Security Council voted to impose an air and arms embargo against Libya by 15 April, unless the country provided full and effective response to its request for cooperation.

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The Executive Director of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, Giorgio Giacomelli, has warned that the world could lose the war against illicit drug abuse and trafficking. Speaking to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs on Monday in Vienna as it opened its thirty-fifth session, Mr. Giacomelli said the situation had become "extremely serious" and called on States to show real, consistent and lasting will in a concerted effort tc win the fight against drugs.

Reporting on the Programme's first year of operation and its future plans, Mr. Giacomelli said that its strategy would be developed in complete transparency. He stressed the importance of sharing responsibilities in the fight against drug abuse, saying the Programme must not be made a scapegoat of the drug problem. While the United Nations would not shirk its responsibilities on the issue, he said, it was time for society at large to take its share of responsibility for the problem. He pointed out that the Programme needed independence to "to make sure that it does not become the hapless victim of sterile and dangerous confrontations between States or continents".

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Also at Monday's session, the newly expanded Commission elected Eugenio Anguiano Roch of Mexico as its Chairman. Membership, up from 40, now stands at 53 in response to the growing complexity of the Commission's role as the policy-making organ of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme.

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The need to address technological imbalances between developed and developing countries in the information field was stressed this morning by speakers participating in the Committee on Information's general debate.

Matters discussed included the need for an new world information and communication order to address information imbalances, cooperation between the Department of Public Information (DPI) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the fundamental importance of freedom of information and expression.

Several speakers again expressed concern about the plan to merge a number of United Nations information centres with field offices of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). They said the cost-saving measures should not be carried out at the expense of information centres in the developing countries.

Among the speakers, the representative of the Russian Federation, Aleksandr V. Denisov, said DPI was dealing successfully with the increased demands placed upon it. However, he said, it was the Commitee's responsibility to keep from overburdening DPI with too many tasks. Any effort to try to satisfy everyone would reduce the effectiveness of the information provided.

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